

Shaping Our Urban Future

Upper Hutt – A Great Place to Live

Our City's vision, 'Upper Hutt - A Great Place to Live' encapsulates why the Urban Growth Strategy is important. Upper Hutt is where we choose to live, work and play – it's where we call home.

Developing an urban growth strategy is about planning ahead for the type, range and form of urban environments we wish to create or protect. It's about shaping our future, deciding on development options, and creating opportunities.

Decisions made now lock into place the type and quality of urban environment that current and future generations of residents will inherit. It also locks into place the associated and on-going financial costs of living in, servicing and running that urban environment, now and in the future.

The Strategy is about planning ahead to ensure that our City meets the needs of residents and business into the 21st Century while keeping the environment in good shape for the future. Getting the right fit of development options will help attract and keep people and businesses.

What Makes a City Work?

Communities work and are constantly changing in response to the decisions made by individuals, families, groups, organisations, businesses and government.

To understand how the community works, we describe it in terms of the economy, the environment, the social systems and the culture of the community. We look at how many people live here, where they come from and what they do. We look at what businesses are here, and what changes are occurring in business investment. We look at our environment, what state it is in and what risks face us in future. We also

need to understand how the people of Upper Hutt operate, our culture and what is most important to us.

All of these factors feed into the changing dynamics of the community, and how we move forward as a community. Council is able to facilitate this process of moving forward, and it does involve everyone.

Facing the Future

In addition to thinking about how we want to live, and where we want to work and play, communities must also address physical change to the structure of the city. This includes matters like ageing building stock, renewing and upgrading infrastructure, and changing costs associated with the supply of energy to run our homes, businesses and transport.

The physical structure of our cities [our buildings, infrastructure and established amenities] is set in place for a long time. It cannot change or adapt quickly to change due to the sheer financial investments involved.

The time horizon required to plan for and adapt to change also requires forethought. We can make fast decisions about our own lives, but where others are involved it takes longer. Where a whole city or nation is involved, it may take much longer, and as individuals, it may seem that we can only ever have limited effect on global matters like climate change and energy supply.

National level debates include central government's call for the local government sector to encourage affordable housing and energy efficiency. On the global stage, the Stern Report (October 2006) calls for all governments to direct 1% of GDP per annum towards reducing greenhouse gas emissions and to promote things like sustainable and energy efficient housing.

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Why Have an Urban Growth Strategy?

The Urban Growth Strategy will help us to address some of these big topics at a local level – the community that we live in.

It will also help us to address some local issues – the area of land zoned for urban purposes is now being developed, and we need to identify new land and new ways of providing opportunity for further growth of businesses, housing and related services.

In planning to accommodate additional growth, the Council will look at how best to adapt to changing local, national and international conditions while at the same time maintaining those features which make this city a great place to live.

The Urban Growth Strategy has a focus on managing development over the next ten to twenty years, not only to meet our immediate needs but also those of the community for the next twenty to fifty years and beyond.

Ultimately the Urban Growth Strategy will guide decision making to ensure that our growth is well integrated, affordable and sustainable.

Providing for Local Employment and Business Opportunities

A strong local economy, with local employment, businesses and services, is a vital component of sustainable urban development. New businesses and new business investment attract new residents who purchase local goods and services, which in turn further grows the local economy and so the economic cycle continues.

A growing population and economy create more opportunities for everyone. More local employment reduces the need to commute; a strong and growing local economy underpins a stable and prosperous community. The Council is able to invest in good infrastructural services and the city as a whole is more able to recover quickly from any shock.

The Strategy looks to strengthen existing business locations by growing and expanding the range of activities that can establish within the central city, and to encourage consolidation of activities in existing business areas throughout the city. It also identifies new locations where industrial and business development may establish in the future.

Providing for Housing

Our natural environment is a major factor in the quality of life for Upper Hutt residents. The Hutt River and surrounding hills are part of our identity. Upper Hutt prides itself on being a family-oriented city, with more spacious suburban housing development and lots of trees. The city has a high level of amenity.

Housing stock is generally in good repair, with many homes dating from the 1950s and 1960s. Upper Hutt does not have areas of urban decay, but there are opportunities to create a wider range of housing options, especially for those who do not want to care for larger sections or who prefer a more 'urban' lifestyle. Some older housing warrants renewal, and cumulatively, continuing piecemeal infill on a section by section basis is changing the character of some areas.

It is important to plan ahead so that decision making and financial investments in housing can be directed to achieve the outcomes that the community wishes to create for the future. Otherwise, there is a risk that ad hoc residential growth and expansion can be inefficient and therefore costly to service and sustain. Without good design, it could degrade the high amenity values that we currently enjoy.

Council proposes to put in place provisions that will enable a range of development options to meet the changing needs of the Upper Hutt community into the 21st Century. Development options will cater for all sectors of the community, and are also intended to achieve the sustainable use and development of the city's natural and physical resources.

In particular the Urban Growth Strategy:

- Shows where greenfield residential expansion could occur
- Provides for other development options that can be retrofitted into our existing urban environment
- Encourages a greater diversity and choice of housing and business development
- Guides decision making to achieve an affordable and sustainable compact urban form.

Providing for the Community

The benefit of the Urban Growth Strategy is that it will guide where and how future development occurs and will ensure that the fundamental elements of the city – its roads, infrastructural services, parks, reserves, neighbourhood centres, business areas, community facilities and housing – work effectively for us and those who choose to live here in future years. It's also about making sure that our city is resilient and ready to face the future.

Having adopted the Strategy, Council can begin to put into effect the necessary changes to the District Plan, investment in capital works and development of other policies and programmes to give effect to the community's expectations.

It's all about shaping the future of our City together.